WRESTLING THEN & NOW

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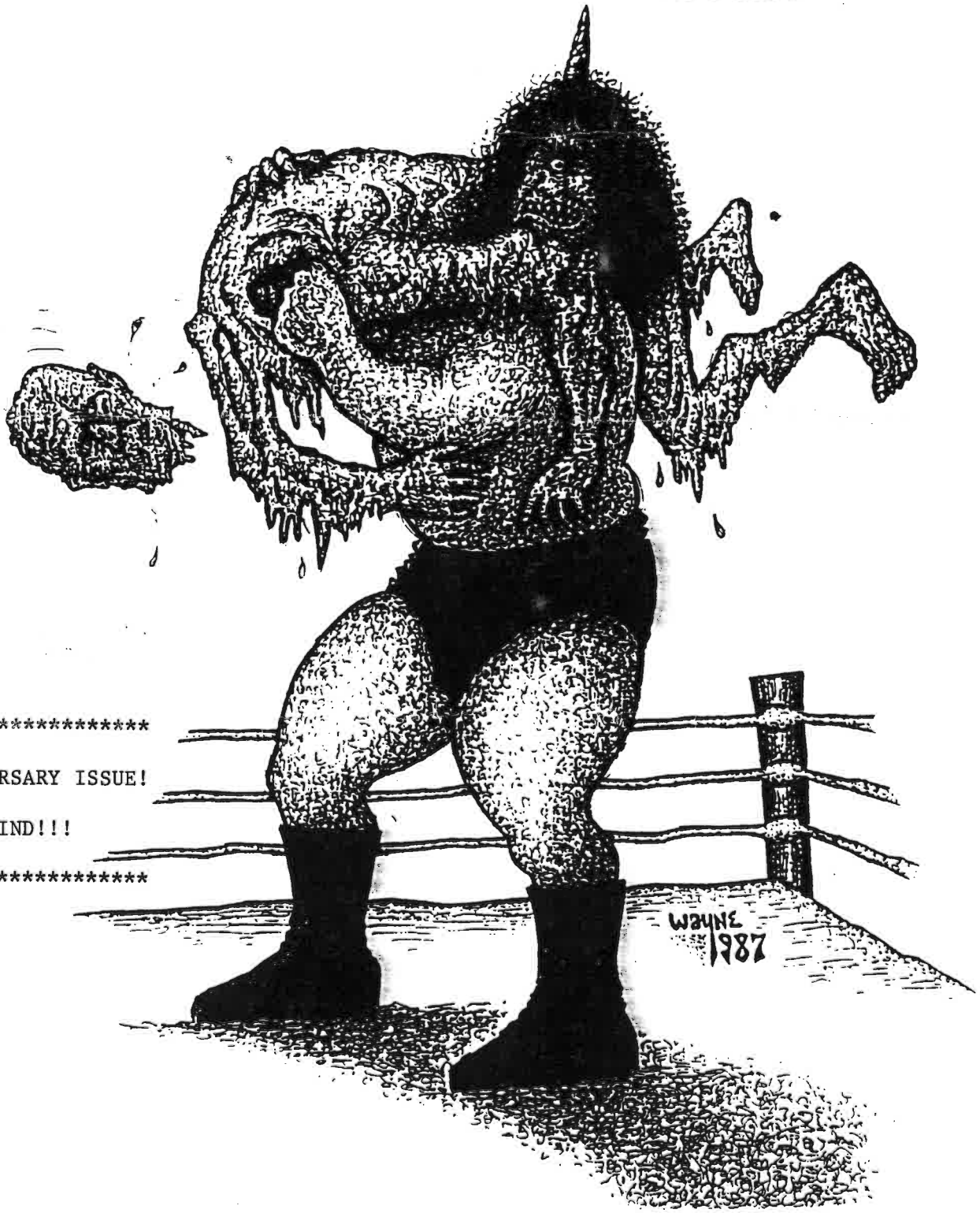

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WT&N'S 4TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

IT'LL BLOW YOUR MIND!!!

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WELCOME

Welcome to WT&N's 4th Anniversary issue. It's hard to believe, but 48 issues, 2 annuals and almost 600 pages later, we're still going strong.

Thank you...

And I do mean thank YOU. That's everyone who threw down their hard earned money, submitted an article, sent in clippings or gave us a plug. It's your support that keeps this sheet going and I couldn't think of a nicer way to start this celebration than to express my sincerest gratitude to each and everyone out there.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

WT&N is about going back in time. It's about exploring roots. It's about doing something DIFFERENT in a wrestling newsletter. I thought long and hard about what I wanted to do with this special issue and decided to go back to WT&N's own roots. Long-time readers remember WT&N when I had virtually no "staff", and I basically shared my heartfelt feelings and warm memories. I did a whole lot more writing in those days, and this issue I have the urge to, well, write! Along with Vic Stanley and Eddie Goldman, we're going to explore several concepts and issues you rarely if ever see in the sheets.

Included as well is an interview I did with the colorful Wayne St. Wayne. Wayne is one of the many wrestlers who have floated in and out of the business, worked the territories, and never exactly "made it big." But unlike interview subjects who stay "in character" or are afraid to speak openly because they're scared to burn bridges, Wayne gives us an insight into the business that few others will. Thus, for our special anniversary issue we DON'T seek out one of the legends, but rather a fascinating guy who as he puts it, "won maybe six matches my whole career."

Next issue our regular features and writers return.

Enjoy this special issue...

I. "IT'S NOT REAL..."

I hate when non-fans ask me the traditional question, "How can you like that stuff if it's not real?" Because what they're really saying is, "Why's an intelligent fellow like you wasting your time with that stuff?"

Well, when Clint or Arnold or Stallone pick up a gun in a movie and blow away a baddie, that's not "real" either. Yet you're caught up in a well made film because simply put, it works. And even the finest theatrical piece is "just acting." But if it's special, you're transported to another world and you forget you're watching performers on a stage.

I think the missing part of this puzzle is the "suspension of disbelief." In all of his matches, Bruno Sammartino made great comebacks; yet these dramatic moments didn't lack credibility- hell, he WAS strong as a horse! And when a Billy Robinson or Dory Funk or Lou Thesz exhibited an incredible move, their opponent may have sold like crazy, but hey, these guys REALLY were incredible! But when Hulk Hogan got hit with a top heel's finisher and fluffed it off like Superman would a bullet, that suspension of disbelief was gone.

And soon so many of the older fans who loved the drama, the spectacle, the sport were gone too...

CHICAGO — INTERNATIONAL AMPHITHEATRE—1-1-44 — Hans Schmidt defeated Ray Gunkel as both wrestlers fell from the ring and Schmidt climbed back in time; "Killer" Kowalski beat Yukon Eric; Pat O'Connor teamed Ivan Rasputin in a tag match Larry Chene and Billy Goelz won by disqualification over Art Neilsen and The Sheik of Araby; Sky-Hi-Lee beat Bobby Nelson.

CHICAGO—MARIGOLD ARENA—1-16-44—Argentina Rocca defeated The Zebra Kid (Lenny Montana) in two straight falls; Yukon Eric pinned Zack Mahkov with a bear hug; Sky-Hi-Lee beat Jack Carter with a skull crusher; Gypsy Joe and The Sheik of Araby defended their midwest junior heavyweight tag title beating Elmar Olsen and Jerry Woods; Farmer Jones beat Duke De Metri and Paul De Gallo beat Mel Dove.

CHICAGO—RAINBO ARENA—1-12-44—Ray Eckert beat Jim Wright; Walter Palmer defeated Joe Milich; Al Kashey won from Red Kirkpatrick; John Arpin drew with Merrill Lassen; Guy Brunetti pinned Tony Steele and George Bolos beat Bob Weaver.

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II. Why Publish?

So, if you've soured on professional wrestling, why publish a wrestling newsletter?

Well, you see it's like this. I always have loved professional wrestling, and when done "right," I probably always will. When a Bruno or SuperStar or Ivan Koloff was in town, there was NOWHERE I'd rather be. Back then a ticket was almost a legal agreement– you spent your hard earned money, and wrestlers worked their butts off for you. If matches 1, 3, & 5 didn't quite cut it, you could bet the mortgage that bouts 2, 4, and 6 would rock your socks. Guaranteed. Plain and simple.

In late 1989 it dawned on me that nobody was doing a monthly newsletter devoted to this rich history. If I wasn't going to write about the Johnny Rodz's and Johnny Valentines and all the Johnny's before them, than who was?

And I quickly learned the perks and the problems of publishing. On the positive side I met some of my heroes, made friends throughout the world, and in a sense became a small part of people's lives in places I may never, ever get to see. On the other hand I've given up a precious chunk of my free time for very (very!) little money. But WT&N's never been about money– it's about honoring athletes who sacrificed their body for you night after night. When you go to an old-timers' reunion, you're shocked and saddened at the realization that some of your heroes have NOT aged well. Some are hunched over, using canes, or frankly, "down on their luck." You wonder how fortunes could have been made off these men, but this was allowed to happen. And although this small newsletter can't hope to right these wrongs, at the very least we can honor those who gave their all for US.

III. ARMCHAIR BOOKERS

I've always been a little disappointed that only a dozen or so workers (past and present) read my sheet. I think there's still a strong anti-sheet feeling among those in the business. There's the old "armchair booker" complaint. "Where do you get the nerve to knock someone who has the guts to get in the ring?" they'll ask. And to a certain extent, maybe they're right. But there's plenty of film critics who never acted or directed and countless sports announcers who never played football, basketball, baseball, etc. I think that after 22 years of watching wrestling and after attending literally thousands of matches in a dozen or so states, territories and Mexico, I'm more than qualified to say that Sean Michaels is a good worker and Giant Gonzales most certainly isn't.

I do, however, think that armchair booking does gets out of hand when sheet editors and columnists cross that line from being an enthusiast to someone bordering on the fanatic. When Dave Meltzer registers a generally legitimate beef with a worker or booker, his opinions are passed down to 27 lesser sheets, and for the most part the "sheet community" develops an almost obsessive dislike for said individual (the hapless Eric Watts is a prime example).

Frankly, these people should be getting out of the house more.

And when 300 pound writers begin challenging 300 pound wrestlers, and they write to shock rather than enlighten, we've already crossed the line where we're part of the problem and not the solution.

IV. PERSPECTIVES

Maybe I was always wrong. Dead wrong.

A few months back, John Mehno, former employee for a WWWF promoter wrote a piece for WT&N on some of the wrestlers I loved when I was a kid. He stated that Johnny Valiant was not a good worker. And similarly, SuperStar Billy Graham admitted publicly that he too was not a great worker. Although they're undoubtedly valid, such criticisms stopped me dead in my tracks.

See, when I was a kid, these guys were IT. When I saw them, buildings shook beneath my feet and my heart pounded out of my chest. To this day I can think of 20 matches that were "prettier" than Bruno-Graham, and many that were technically superior to the Valiants vs. Dean Ho and Tony Garea, but were any more EXCITING?

The point I'm trying to make is that as a supposed expert, a historian if you will, my memories are clouded by emotion. To a certain extent they're the perspective of a child and not a jaded veteran viewer of two plus decades. Other sheets can analyze, categorize and rank to their hearts content, but I prefer to keep my memories intact. I don't want to pick and gnaw at them and expose the flaws. They mean too much to me.

Just too much...

Baron Leone Bags Wrestling Main

Baron Michele Leone lowered the boom on Enrique Torres in their two-of-three fall wrestling main last night at the Coliseum. Leone won the first fall on a neckbreaker, lost the second and clinched the verdict with a body press.

In the tag-team match of the mighty midgets, Fuzzy Cupid and Irish Jackie chalked up a victory over Prince Haleale and Little Beaver. Other exhibitions found John Demchuck tripping Jack Britton and Dan Savich and Jesse James going to a draw.

SAN DIEGO UNION Feb '52

Wrestling 6/79

Dino Bravo won the Canadian heavyweight wrestling championship by defeating Greg Valentine with a back drop at 10:10 of their one-fall match at Maple Leaf Gardens last night.

Bobby Backlund retained his World Wide Wrestling Federation championship by pinning Ernie (The Cat) Ladd at 24:31.

Ricky Steamboat pinned Big John Studd at 14:06.

Paul Orndorff used a reverse cradle to defeat Moose Morowski at 9:42.

In a tag-team match, Jay Youngblood and Johnny Weaver defeated Brute Bernard and Swede Hansen at 12:53.

Dewey Robertson used a top spread to defeat Joe Marcus at 10:31.

Johnny Yachetti and Chris Tolos wrestled 15 minutes to a draw.

Next pro card at the Gardens is Sunday, June 24, at 8 p.m.

MAT MARKETPLACE

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V. WRESTLING JOURNALISM

The facts- nothing but the facts.

That for the most part is what wrestling fans want. Who's wrestling where- who's jumping promotions- who said what about whom. Any juicy tidbit of gossip is voraciously devoured.

In a recent article in a publication called Wrestling Perspective, a columnist called the Phantom listed the greatest wrestling writers of all-time. Frankly, his criteria was not something I completely agreed with. Those who exhibited the greatest wrestling knowledge rated a listing, but in my opinion a good reporter doesn't necessarily make a GREAT writer.

You see, I want to be MOVED when I read something. I want writing that leaps off a page and grabs me. I want to be touched, saddened, angered; I want to FEEL something. If I want the facts, I'll go to a Dave or Wade. Nobody does it better. But when I read a Vic Stanley, for example, I learn something about the human condition while marvelling at how he miraculously ties it into wrestling.

And THAT'S what wrestling journalism and all good writing should be about.

VI. MEMORIES

Over the 4 years of this sheet I've shared many. But there are so many more. So many...

I'm 12 years old, walking in Manhattan with my mother. She says to me, "Isn't that Dean Ho? The wrestler you like so much?" And I stop and gawk. Because your heroes don't walk the streets like mere mortals. They battle in front of 22,092 (the legit sellout figure- I'll never forget!) at Madison Square Garden. And seeing I'm in a "state of shock" she approaches and asks for an autograph for me. I stare, speechless except for a thank you that somehow rises from my throat.

And I think back to when I'd buy newsstand magazines, and decorate my room with the pin-ups. And one was a photo of Baron Von Rashke sporting a swastika. My grandmother did NOT appreciate that, as so many of her family had died in the holocaust. "But it's just a show, grandma..." But to her it represented EVIL, and it did come down.

And that first trip to Philly for the NWA. 10 matches. 9 bloodbaths. The hardcores bitterly complained about the "screw-job" finishes in the sheets, but I didn't care what the experts said. THIS was wrestling nirvana. EVERY match had a foreign object, a run-in, a "Dusty" angle. And 40 pounds past his prime, old Dusty could still work that crowd as well. And his shows were WILD. You could feel the unbelievable heat. Ron Bass and Buddy Landell went to a brutal 30 minute draw. And the Midnight Express showed why THEY (and not the Road Warriors) were the greatest team of the 80's. And of course Flair. The "60 minute man" may only have gone 30 or so on this night, but he oozed more charisma just standing in the ring than any 6 workers wrestling in it. At intermission fans lined up for NEXT MONTH'S tickets, as did we. Because this was WORTH travelling 125 miles to. Each and every month.

And then there was New York's old Sunnyside Gardens. Chief Jay Strongbow and Billy White Wolf (later Sheik Adnan) going 45 minutes in the unairconditioned, sauna-like setting. We wondered if they'd live through the incredibly steamy night. Sunnyside Gardens later was turned into a Wendy's- as crazy as it may sound I wouldn't spend a nickel in the place for a good ten years. They had torn down a shrine.

Memories...so many memories.

Too many to share for now.

FEB. 18, 1971 SHOW

Monsoon, Morales Team Up for Victory

Gorilla Monsoon and Pedro Morales defeated the Black Demon and Black Jack Mulligan in the wrestling feature last night in National Arena.

In other bouts, Chief Jay Strongbow defeated Joe Turco, Magnificent Maurice defeated Carlos Peredes, the Wolfman defeated Jean Dubois, Jack Evans defeated Lee Wong, Bull Pometti defeated Miguel Feliciano and Manuel Soto defeated Mike Conrad.

D.C.

WT&N ANNUALS:

The Great Territories (1992/50 pgs. U.S.- $7 Overseas $10)

Rarities... Oddities & Territories (1993/60 pgs. U.S.- $8 Overseas $10)

For these and all WT&N orders make all checks payable to Evan Ginzburg

Please tell a friend about WT&N!!!

Boston Arena Annex

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1965

— MAIN BOUT —

4 - Man Tag Team Match - 4

Frank Scarpa and Cowboy Blatz VS. Wild Bull Curry and Bruno Samnartino

Gorgeous George vs. Tony Zollo

Hobo Brazil vs. Golden Boy

Magnificent Chevier vs. Jesse James

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1982	ALABAMA US Junior Heavyweight Title
1983	FLORIDA Global Tag Team Title, with Magnum Terry Allen
1983	ALABAMA Southeastern Tag Team Title, with Scott Armstrong
1984	GEORGIA National Title (twice)
1984	MID-SOUTH North American Title
1986	ALABAMA Continental Title (3 times)
1987	UWF Tag Team Title, with Tim Horner
1988	ALABAMA/TENNESSEE CWF Tag Team Title, with The Bullet (Bob Armstrong)
1991	WCW 6-Man Tag Team Title, as Badstreet with Michael Hayes & Jimmy Garvin
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JUST ANOTHER CYNICAL SHEET WRITER? I HOPE NOT!

by Vic Stanley

I can be just as sour on certain aspects of the wrestling business as the next guy, especially if the next guy (or gal) vents his (or her) spleen in their own column in one wrestling newsletter or another. With all the Monday morning quarterbacking going on lately (as always), no wonder the Ole Andersons of the world get frustrated to the point of physically threatening some of the annoying little nebbishes that torment him like a mosquito or a tick or something. Who among us remains unscathed when bombarded with constant abuse and criticism from inconsequential know–it–alls, especially when our jobs are on the line? I daresay that the self–coronated watchdogs of wrestling have dug themselves into a rut lately because of their relentless tirades. "WCW doesn't have a clue!", "McMahon should be in prison!", "Terry Funk or Eddie Gilbert or Jim Cornette should run wrestling!" Maybe this is all true, but then again, it's not our hard earned cash that is on the line. If it came down to it, how many of us would be ready, willing and able to put our money where our mouths are? In the big scheme of things, wouldn't all this earnest concern be better channelled into something real and important? I would much rather spend my time criticizing Bill Clinton, whose decisions REALLY affect our lives than brooding over the fact that Eric Bischoff doesn't seem to understand the business. I love wrestling but WHO CARES who the booker is this week? I do care to a certain extent, but not enough to let the fate of pro wrestling dictate my emotional state.

I no longer read a couple of the more popular sheets because I get a bad feeling from them. I don't enjoy reading them any more than their writers seem to enjoy writing about wrestling. Sure, they are concerned about the future of the business but their perspectives have gotten way out of whack. You can count the number of people who actually make a living off of their newsletters on 2 fingers. The rest of us do it because of a love for the biz but often we hurt it more than we help it. Should we really take pride in contributing to somebody losing their job? It is any of our business? Did wrestling improve because of it? In the particular case to which I am referring, that very same writer is kicking and screaming louder than ever about that very same promotion. In this case, he did not contribute anything positive to wrestling and never will if he continues on the same track. Writers like him have convinced themselves that they are as important to the business as those who have invested their blood, sweat, tears, reputations and hard earned money into it. They are deluding themselves with a distorted sense of self worth. Maybe their own problems transcend mere wrestling. The most profound impact they have on the business is that people like me cancel our subscriptions to their editor's newsletters.

Even if wrestling does continue on a downward spiral, what's the worst that can happen? Smaller promotions will do shows in smaller auditoriums in smaller towns all across the country for a lower admission fee. That doesn't sound too bad to me. As far as the wrestlers earning a living, the best will always do well and as for the rest, well maybe some people never should have gotten into the business in the first place. I am more an advocate of supply and demand than I am of the welfare state. I love wrestling but I am not worried about it. If it's good, I'll enjoy it. If it's bad, I won't bother with it. Call me a fair weather fan if you like, but just how seriously am I supposed to take pro wrestling, anyway? Right now I feel as cranky and self righteous as everybody else. It must be time for me to shut up, too!

Upcoming in WT&N:

Next issue: all our regulars return plus our feature article is Amarillo, Tx. 70's!

Upcoming interviews:

Eddie Goldman with Tiger Conway Jr. & Sr.

Dr. Mike Lano with Johnny Valentine

Evan Ginzburg with Lanny Poffo

Mike Rodgers with promoter Don Owen

Billie Jessie with the Power Twins, Slammers' colorful Verne Langdon, The Patriot, Bart Sawyer and more!

If you enjoy WT&N tell a friend!!!

IRON MIKE EINHORN- THE MUFFIN MAN

"HOW IRON MIKE SPENT HIS SUMMER VACATION"

And just for laughs...

I'm sitting here watching Soul Train thinking about the vacation I took this past August. I covered 7 states & D.C. under the cover of darkness in two weeks. Some highlights (?) come to mind:

1) Seeing Gladys Knight free in concert in Coney Island with Evan and watching people dance I wouldn't even want to see walk.
2) Eating hot dogs at Nathan's, also in Coney Island, and wondering whenever a firetruck came by with its' siren on, if my car was set on fire and they were coming to put it out.
3) Seeing Springsteen's house one night and John Gotti's the next.
4) Eating at a restaurant in Eatontown, N.J. called CLUCK-U chicken.
5) Going to a Yankee game with (the legendary) David Kramer and seeing MEAT LOAF sing the National Anthem.
6) Eating at the diner from the movie "Diner" in Baltimore.
7) Evan asking me if I wanted to go see wrestling at the Garden and me telling him I had other plans.
8) Helping Evan move and breaking the glass of an expensive coffee table (but we won't get into that).
9) Going to the Bottom Line to see Shawn Colvin record a live album & then going to Chinatown for dinner and Little Italy for dessert.
10) Meeting Evan's girlfriend, the Lovely Louise (who I might add was packing some serious booty that night).
11) Seeing rockabilly singer Robert Gordon perform at Traamps. Gordon, if you remember was big in the late 70's and early 80's and hasn't done much since. If I want nostalgia, I'll date my grandmother.

As you can see this vacation wasn't something out of a Club Med brochure. All I can say is if you need a change of scenary, date a stage hand.

A plant named Fern: From Kazoo's Mom of St. Paul:
"I loved the gecko lizard named Art Gecko, and it reminded me of a couple of plants that we have had. We have an areca palm named Arnold Palmer. And we had a fern named Fern Gagne — but someone put The Sleeper on him and he died."

UP AGAINST THE WALL!!!
by Eddie Goldman

THE IGNOMINY OF WRESTLING

Wrestling is the world's oldest sport, and pro wrestling is at present its most popular form. Yet pro wrestling has such a stigma and is held in such dishonor that even many of its staunchest fans conceal from friends and co-workers alike their passion for the mat game. For many years I, too, was victimized by this stigma and felt too uncomfortable to attend many live shows, even though I had generally enjoyed the ones I had seen. While I regularly watched it on TV over the years, and everyone who knew me even fairly well was aware of my lifelong love of wrestling, something held me back from taking it seriously enough to spend even more time and any money on it. Many factors converged to help "convert" me to hardcore-dom. What was critical was the example and encouragement of other fans who were smart, both to wrestling and the world, and who showed me it was possible to follow it quite closely and seriously without losing one's dignity, sanity, or intelligence. But as yet the hardcores are still small in number and their influence limited. The issue still must be addressed: why is pro wrestling held in such ignominy, and what can be done to reverse this?

While I am not aware of any formal research done on this subject, it is safe to say that the most likely number one reason for wrestling's ignominy is that it is considered "fake", and not real sport. If that is not number one, it surely is close to the top. Most in the wrestling business legitimately disdain the word "fake" because it takes no account of the real skill of the wrestlers, their hard work, and the pain and abuse involved in regularly taking bumps. These points are well-taken, but still do not address the issue of the predetermined nature of wrestling's finishes, angles, etc. However, if we examine the logic of those who say they hold wrestling in disrepute because it is "fake" or staged, some interesting dilemmas arise. Would these people prefer that the wrestlers really were delivering all their blows at full force, really trying to strangle and gouge their opponents, really triple-teaming them, etc.? I doubt anyone who dislikes wrestling because it is "fake" would say yes. Then if they don't want this product to be real, then their problem is with the product itself, not that it is "fake". Then, logically, they should prefer a less barbaric and truly legitimate style of wrestling, such as collegiate, freestyle, or Greco-Roman. While these styles are generally more respected, they generate even less fan interest than does the pro style. So then since most people who complain that pro wrestling is "fake" also dislike all other known forms of wrestling, we can at least partially conclude that the problem for these people is mainly not that it is "fake", but that it is wrestling to begin with. I really don't believe many people at all, if any, refuse to be pro wrestling fans because they intellectually, philosophically, or ethically cannot condone something staged. Otherwise, they would read no fiction, view no movies, and watch no TV dramas or comedies.

No, the real source of wrestling's ignominy lies elsewhere. This issue was partially addressed by the French sociologist Roland Barthes in his 1957 essay "The World of Wrestling" in his collection Mythologies. Barthes begins by declaring that wrestling's "virtue ... is that it is the spectacle of excess." That it is staged, he says, "ought to mitigate its ignominy." But here, from a sympathetic standpoint, he touches on the key reason for wrestling's ignominy. The critics make this same point, but describe this charcteristic as "sleazy", or, as the snob on the "Donohue" show on the WWF scandals whined, "it's so tacky."

In other words, despite itself, wrestling fails to communicate socially-accepted, respectable values. Despite so many of its promoters being politically and socially conservative, and despite the ceaseless xenophobic, racist, and sexist angles and gimmicks, wrestling's purposely hyperbolic, distorted, and bizarre recreation of social interaction actually often conveys more radical messages: there is no justice from the existing authorities, anarchy not order prevails, and crime and cheating pay. The bourgeois manners and etiquette that are forced down our throats as the only acceptable behavior are mocked each time the heels and faces alike point their fingers at the cameras, wipe the sweat from their brows, and rant on with the most unrestrained rhetoric conceivable. The heroes and focus of attention are not well-groomed, dapper clones of junior executive types, but gritty, nasty, sweating lugs who grunt, bleed, and look and sound more like the disenfranchised and dispossessed classes that make up the bulk of wrestling's fans.

In short, it is this salt-of-the-earth quality, this so-called "low brow" ambiance that rub the guardians of and slaves to respectability the wrong way. It is simply self-hatred among the masses, and bourgeois prejudice among the middle and upper classes, that drive these people away from the exaggerated, humorous, and often ridiculous, but still recognizable reprersentations of the masses that make up wrestling's characters, and back into the arms of the commercialized, sanitized, respectable official sports and their well-scrubbed millionaire heroes and heroines.

All I can say to these people is I hope you, like I and so many others, can overcome and break with these class prejudices, for that is all they are. Wrestling's ignominy also does not stem from the current wretched state of its product, or from scandals such as the recent WWF mess. Wrestling's "bad" name preceded these occurrences and even was as strong when most agree that wrestling's quality was far superior to today's, and when more reputable promoters dominated the business.

What these people either dislike or cannot come to terms with can only be called wrestling's aesthetic. Yes, this wild pariah of popular culture is an art form in itself with its own unique aesthetic. The wrestling aesthetic reflects the humor, fears, hopes, temperament, and life experiences of the working class. Its rowdiness reflects a rough and unsettled existence, not the smug security of a well-mannered, clean-fingered elite. Its grace and art reflect the beauty of physical labor, not the sedate parasitism of those who have everything done for them. And its vulgarity reflects the vulgar conditions of existence endured by the bulk of its fans. It is as valid an aesthetic as any other, reflecting the culture of a particular segment of society. To condemn that asethetic is to condemn those whose existence it reflects. Morton and O'Brien in Wrestling to Rasslin' called wrestling "a prole spectacle." WBAI radio host Fred GeoBold refers to it as "proletarian performance art." Indeed, if properly done, pro wrestling, while still outside respectable culture, could once again become one of the most popular sports in America, and even the most popular one.

So just who the hell are those anti-wrestling people anyway to tell us it is not a valid aesthetic? Many are the same humorless snobs and punks who are offended by the sweat, grime, and even blood of hard work. Others are those who have internalized the values of a culture alien to their own interests and existence. I am not concerned with those tolerant souls who just say they don't follow wrestling but have no problem with those who do. I am referring only to those little crawling bugs that stigmatize it and condemn others for their passion. Let's do what we otherwise do to all other such pests and step on them and squash them. Wrestling fans inside and outside the business can learn tremendously from the Black pride and gay pride movements. We should band together and openly and proudly declare our love for this sport. We should relentlessly fight for its dignity and against all those who stigmatize, ridicule, denigrate, and stereotype wrestling and its fans. In the end, only by actively combating this stigma will it be defeated and disappear.

Happy anniversary, WT&N and Evan!!

AN INTERVIEW WITH WAYNE ST. WAYNE
BY: EVAN GINZBURG WITH EDDIE GOLDMAN

EG: We're talking with Wayne St. Wayne, wrestler, manager, artist, poet, performance artist, single dad, renaissance man. Did I leave anything out?
WSW: Why not?
EG: Wayne, why don't you tell us about your wrestling background?
WSW: Okay, before the age of 13, just before my 14th birthday, right up 'till about that time, I wasn't even aware of the existence of pro wrestling. One Saturday, that would have been late 1967 to be vague about it, I was flipping the TV dial around and Petticoat Junction was on Channel 4. That didn't interest me too much, and various other channels had various other varieties of programming. I turned on KPLR TV Channel 11, and wrestling just happened to be on, and I had kind of peripheral semi-awareness of the existence of wrestling, but I had never watched wrestling before. Dick the Bruiser happened to be the person who was involved in the match. I remember it was Dick the Bruiser and Paul Christie, and I guess I was captivated at first by that personna, the look and the psychopathic demeanor. In fact, George Able, the commentator would refer to him as "the psychopath, the pre-historic man, the nut, the missing link," and right then and there I was hooked on wrestling and I watched the repeat the next day and from then on, I never missed a wrestling show. I started going to live shows around May 1968. Wilbur Snyder against the Crusher in a Texas Death Match. I got into the whole fan thing, collecting programs and taking pictures and trading stuff through the mail. Boxes of programs, all kinds of stuff, magazines, I just had it in my mind that I wanted to do that. And I was the least likely person to ever get into a business like that too because I was a shy young thing. Now I'm a shy old thing. I was never in any way, even to this day, interested in any real sports. I don't know if you want to say that- "real"- in the sheet or not. I've never even been remotely interested. I absolutely can't watch hockey, baseball, football, any of that stuff, but I guess wrestling with the theatrical element, the gimmicks, the personna, the personalities, and all that kind of stuff sort of captured me. Yeah, I worked at the downtown YMCA after high school and I got to know Joe Milch who some of these older guys here knew. Quite a few of those guys knew Joe. Joe died a few years ago. He took a liking to me and trained me. Didn't even have a ring. We just worked out together- had a mat in the downtown Y. He got me booked in Amarillo when the Funks had the circuit down there in 1976. The first match was with Art Nelson as Super Destroyer. One of the many Super Destroyers in the history of wrestling. There had been a few, and I watched the match on TV later than afternoon and I was horrified how I looked. I knew I needed a lot of work. What the hell.
EG: (Joking) Who won the match?
WSW: I can't remember. So long ago, but it was kind of interesting. A complete change, a rude awakening, being on the road with all those guys. I wanted to be in the business so badly. I never really had any desire about being the champion, or the main-event star or anything. I just wanted to be a part of it. Get in on some of the parties, the arena rats.
EG: So that was the motivation, not the money?
WSW: That was part of it. Money was not really one of the main factors. Money is nice and allows you to do the things that you like to do of course. But money is not the motivating factor in anything I do really. As long as I can pay my rent and feed the kids, I'm, pretty satisfied.
EG: So, why don't you tell us about some of the other things you're into? You get a lot of press in the St. Louis area.
WSW: Oh, well, my main source of income- I make my living through my paintings. To be a freelance artist, I have to keep really busy, be real productive and get out, and just kind of put my stuff in people's faces. artistically speaking of course. I turn out on the sidewalk in front of a couple of different restaurants in the city here, and I get fed for free. That, plus I meet a lot of people that way, and I always have a few colored prints and smaller pieces that go for a few dollars so that I can get some macaroni and hamburgers on the way home for when the kids get home from school. The painting is the number one thing. Everything else kind of revolves around that. Even all those poetry readings that I participate in. I don't really consider myself a poet although I am incredibly brilliant and stunningly original in anything I do, of course. In grade school and high school they told my parents Wayne could achieve so much if only he applied himself. Now I do apply myself. The performance art, poetry, and now even the wrestling I use for publicity purposes for getting my paintings out for the people. It's a good gimmick. Mad artist, wrestler, poet, painter and all that together.
EG: Speaking of the mad aspect, we've known you to blade during your poetry sessions. What's that all about? What's the statement?
WSW: Yeah, that was at the Venice Cafe and of course I have paintings at the Venice Cafe. Monday nights they have open mike and that was about 2 years ago I started participating in all this stuff. You meet a lot of people. That idea just popped into my head one night. I was trying to think of something different to capture people's attention and it turned out to be a really good way to catch a lot of attention. The word got around, and they didn't like me after that. The owner's didn't really like me for a couple of weeks, but they got over that. They put a sign up over the performing area. Something to the effect of "no self-inflicted injuries during the performance," and the word got around. We got it on tape too. A couple of the people who have local public access TV shows who I happen to know- I told them I was going to do something they absolutely did not want to miss and to bring their video cameras which they did, and so that got on Cable tv. That was the local journalist stopover. The St. Louis Post Dispatch ran an article. They had done that once. That was the kind of thing that if you did all the time it would lose all the effect, as well as I would probably no be welcomed back if I made a regular habit of that.
EG: Tell us about wrestling in the legendary Calgary area.

WSW: I remember the long van trips- parties on wheels. There were a lot of substances floating around that a person could partake in. Not only after the matches, but on the way to the shows. I did all that and had a great time. I've got a lot of substances out of my system since then. I haven't had any alcohol since last summer. I quit pot about 3 months ago. Some artists rely on pot to get in the mood to paint. I thought it was inspiring me and actually it was slowing me down. My productivity shot way up after I stopped. I still do some psychedelics once in a while though. I've always had problems with moderation when it came to certain things, but psychedelics haven't been one of those. I have a little bit more control over that than I did all the other stuff, but generally it was either all or nothing.
EG: Do you feel the psychedelics have a definite effect on your drawing style?
WSW: Well, I think they have a very definite effect. It helps with my perception of the whole life and death and reality and all that sort of stuff is enhanced, I think, and the visuals are something to see too.
EG: My readers have enjoyed your covers and back covers for WT&N. You have a unique style when drawing wrestling. How does your actually being in the ring affect your artistic perception?
WSW: Let me think about this for a second. I think I enjoy the working in the ring for a lot of reasons. I have a lot of reverence for the old timers. I like the older style of wrestling, the holds and even the body language. The physical aspect of it- the posing and the way they weren't afraid to stay in a hold for awhile, and actually look as if they were trying to struggle their way out of it. Meanwhile, the better workers would be pretty conscious of their posture and stance and body language whether they had the hold or were in the hold, and all that stuff. Nowadays I don't really practice. When I work I'm more into comedy and putting on a show. I just have a good time. That's basically it. I'm addicted, I guess to doing things in front of people, whether it's performances in the ring or at a coffee house on open mike night. Whatever it is, and the painting out in the street.
(EDDIE GOLDMAN JOINS IN)
ED: You mentioned performing. It seems there are 3 P's where you perform- painting, poetry and professional wrestling. These are 3 art forms, although some people have had the audacity to deny that professional wrestling is an art form. I'd like to get your opinions on that. How do you see pro wrestling as an art form in its relationship to these other art forms?
WSW: Well, when it's done right, it's an art form physically. I can think of ballet, how the dancers will pick each other up and the one who's going up cooperates and makes his or her body easier to pick up, just like a wrestler does in a body slam. The other psychology is where they would gradually build up the heat and the baby face would be just a little smarter than the heel, and every time a heel would do a real clever move, the baby face would counter it, and go right back to the same hold. The logic would be that the arm or whatever the body part is that the baby face keeps working on starts to really hurt him, and then the heel resorts to those despicable tactics. That way they would gradually tell a story and not feel that they had to be constantly energized, constantly moving. They could take their time and tell a story. They had those hour Broadways- those one hour long championship matches where they would work the people to the point where it might be 30 minutes before any sort of heel move would even occur. Dory Funk might at the 40 minute mark catch Jack Brisco with a forearm and that's not even a heel move! But today you would practically have to decapitate someone to get the same response from the crowd. The psychology is different now. I guess it's an art form today too. I don't watch any current wrestling.
ED: You talk about telling a story. There's very little story telling these days. That's one of the reasons that the matches are not entertaining, why the ratings are down and why many people are turned off to it.
WSW: And the gimmicks, wrestling also has gimmicks but I was thinking in terms of the way it used to be. It was flamboyant personalities as opposed to cartoon caricatures which it is now and there's a big difference between the two.
EG: What would you say is the highlight of your wrestling career?
WSW: I don't know. There have been a few. Been through a lot of different phases and things. There have been ups and downs. There have been a few times when I just dropped out completely and disappeared. I remember in Louisiana in 1980, I think Ox Baker was down there at that time too. I left all my stuff in my room. Most of my clothes. Everything. I just kind of disappeared. I don't know if I hopped on a plane or a greyhound, one or the other, and I went down and shacked up with a friend of mine in Florida which turned out to be a nightmare. There's been a few times like that too. I've had ups and downs like everybody has, but highlights would be some of the people I've met, and some of the most fascinating people I've met have been in the business. I can think of a bunch of them. King Curtis from Hawaii- I met him in Tampa in 1979 and didn't really hang out with him much or anything, but just talking with him. He's just an example of some of the fascinating people. People who were very worldly and intelligent and then some who weren't.
EG: Which defies the cliche, the stereotype that a lot of people have of wrestling.
WSW: Yeah, but I did meet quite a few of them that fit the stereotype too. I think the ringrats were kind of interesting company . There were a lot of periods of time I would be inspired by certain literature I was reading and the arena rats would pretty well be willing to allow me to experiment along the lines of some of the stuff that I was kind of into. Marquis De Sade, for example. I remember Stu Hart gave me a week off- it might have been 2 weeks. I don't know. It was about 1981. I was going through my Marquis De Sade phase and I connected with a couple of escort girls. I don't know if this is going to go in the sheet or not.
EG: How about the radio?
WSW: The radio? (laughs) I was interested in sado-masochism. Played a bit for a while and I wanted to work into it gradually. Gradually, teasingly sort of way, but I guess once these 2 girls had me where they wanted me, it was more up to them in whatever the direction the proceedings took. I remember the next day showing up. We had that long road trip from Calgary to Regina-Saschatewan every Tuesday. Everybody made it to Mohawk Gas Station. Supposedly we'd leave at 11:00 AM but not really. It would be 1:00 by the time the boys showed

up. So I showed up at the Mohawk and the whole back side of my body was a horrendous mess because of the experience the night before. Everybody, Randy Tyler was there, I remember him- can't remember who else- but everybody was very interested in my back. Stu came over and saw that and he decided, "This wouldn't portray our athletes in the light we like." Sometimes these experimentations got me. I had a few close calls.
EG: You could probably write a good book!
WSW: I'm planning on it. I'm going to write my auto-BIOLOGY any day now (laughs).
ED: You talk about Stu Hart in Calgary. We've seen a lot of those great independents come and go. What do you think might happen in the future to help bring back some of the independents? It seems that's where the best wrestling seemed to be over the years.
WSW: Yeah, I don't know. Like I said, I don't really follow the current stuff enough to know what's going on even- business-wise or the style of work either. Once in a while my kids might turn it on for a few minutes. Even though wrestling might be on, I'll be in the next room painting or something. I'm not a TV watcher. I'm not interested in watching TV. The only thing I watch is if somebody has tapes from the 50''s to 60's. I'll watch that. Anyway, Calgary always had a reputation for all the parties on wheels, the van trips, and all the crazy stuff, but it also had a great reputation and it was a really good place to learn. The Hart family were very interesting people.
EG: Tell us about the legendary Hart dungeon.
WSW: I slept down there many a night. I was living in Edmonton, and I'd be in Calgary all week and I'd stay in Calgary just so I could catch my rides to the town. So I slept down in the dungeon a few times. Cheaper than a hotel room. Yeah, the dungeon.
EG: If it's not too personal, it must be interesting for your children to have a dad who is a wrestler, poet...painter. It's not the traditional father figure or however you would put it. How do you feel about this?
WSW: I think it's good for them. They meet a lot of different people. All three of them have been to wrestling various times since they were born. They were all born up in Edmonton, and sometimes I've taken them to poetry readings or when I do my street artist thing, I have one or two or sometimes three of us. Usually I just like one at a time, because any more than that drives me crazy. I think it's pretty good for them. They have a lot of other influences too. Other family members and school and things like that to keep all of them down to earth. There is a lot of love. They get a lot of affection and attention and they feel free too. I don't know how many other kids tell their Dad to shut up, but they feel comfortable enough to talk back to me and tell me shut up.
ED: Most kids today.
WSW: Do they?
EG: Tell us about some of the legends you worked with.
WSW: Oh, man. I worked with Buddy Rogers down in Tampa in '79 when he made a big comeback down there. It was just a TV match. 5 or 6 minutes. I know I probably won about 6 matches in all the years that I worked, but I never cared, you know. I just had a good time. I worked with Pat O'Connor a bunch of times. He always treated me real well. I was never any amateur wrestler. Never got in fights- I was always somebody who when challenged to a real fight, I would think of something I just had to do, somewhere else I had to be, right away! "Catch you later!" And any of the guys I worked with could have just tied me up in 2 seconds. Who else? Gene Kiniski in Vancouver and Ray Steven in Florida. A bunch of guys down in Florida. I was there for a pretty long time. Dusty Rhodes...Briscos...
EG: You've touched greatness. Literally!
WSW: Yeah, I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed even just being with those guys, being around them, being in the dressing room, on the road.
EG: How does it feel to be in the ring with a childhood hero?
WSW: Great. I really enjoyed that, because you won't forget those days and how those guys looked to me at a young age and how I would look forward to the match. All the stuff you write in your sheet- about the trips to the matches and the anticipation sitting in school during the day on that Friday thinking about nothing but that evening- Dick the Bruiser and Pat O'Connor just the whole atmosphere. I was one of these who would get to the arena really early and hang out by the stage door, and then you would see all your regular people who you didn't usually see. People you wouldn't see in your daily life- that you would see at every match. You know, you'd get the autographs, take pictures, all that stuff. Wait for the guys to come in. You know, I'll never forget those days and even the visuals- being a visually oriented person, one of the things that I enjoy doing is wrestling. Being in the wrestling scene. Just the way these guys looked under the lights, and in the ring and all the visual and audio effects. It will always be with me. I still daydream and when I do I see it, hear it going on sometime.
EG: Would you advise any young people today to get into the business if they were really interested in it? If they had some talent?
WSW: Oh yeah! I mean anybody, young people who have a desire, a dream. I would advise them to try it. To keep at it and be willing to stick with it, and I think that's what most people, anybody who does go anywhere will feel that way too. Anybody who achieves anything will stick with it no matter what. That's why some people are a success while others give up.
ED: Would you want to go more full-time into it if you had the opportunity today?
WSW: No, not anymore. I'm into the painting. That's what I want to do. I have really big visions of where I'm going with the paintings. A lot of people, a few people have suggested that I might be delusional in that regard, but that's fine because that's what energizes me and drives me is that delusion that someday I'll be ranked right alongside any of those immortals that you care to name. And it will probably be within the next couple of years or so. (laughs) I want world-wide eternal immortality! That's all.

EG: Recognition while you're here, not after you die!
WSW: Yeah, it's happening already, you know. Part of it is the desire and the drive which I definitely have plus the technology helps. We have Kinko's color copies. I've spent hundreds of dollars there. It's worth it. You can send your work everywhere- I've sent stuff to Egypt, Nigeria.... I have this other vision in my head- sort of like what I do in St. Louis. I want to paint in the streets of cities all over the world.
EG: Since we are being tossed out of the room, any further comments or questions?
WSW: Your readers are welcome to write me- put my address on your sheet if you want. I love getting mail. I get bills all the time, but I love getting letters too. Almost as much as I like getting bills. Silly-ass phone company shut me off just because I didn't pay my bill for a few months, and I didn't know they have a brain in their head, because I thought if I would just ignore it for a few months they would have the sense, the presence of mind to stop sending it! It's not only that they keep sending those bills, but they get bigger each month and now they shut me off. I can't understand what's wrong with them! They must not have a brain in their cranatorium I guess!
EG: We've been talking with Wayne St. Wayne, A.K.A. Dr. Blood, Buddy Frankenstein et al, right here in St. Louis, Mo., May 8, 1993. Thanks a lot, Wayne
WSW: Thank you...

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WAYNE ST. WAYNE!